

European University Association (EUA), Brussels

Statement on behalf of the “EUA European Platform of Universities engaged in Energy Research (EPUE)” on the Public Consultation on the Energy Roadmap 2050

(i) EPUE – a new player in European energy policy

On 2 July 2010 the European University Association (EUA) submitted its views to the Public consultation on Towards a New Energy Strategy for Europe, 2011-2020. In its submission, EUA announced its intention to establish **the European Platform of Universities engaged in Energy Research (EPUE)** to strengthen the position of Europe’s universities in energy research. The main tasks of the European Platform (EPUE) are seen as the following:

1. To provide a strong voice for universities in EU energy research, particularly in the SET-Plan context;
2. To ensure that characteristic university attributes such as fundamental research and training are properly included in the upcoming EU energy activities;
3. To facilitate competitive European university groupings to participate in the realisation of the SET-Plan, in particular through the EERA and the Joint-Programming activities;
4. To bind more strongly the various disciplines ranging from natural sciences, engineering to social sciences and arts/humanities to best fulfil the needs of the society in energy research;
5. To speak for long-term thinking in European research agendas and initiatives, with due consideration given to a balance between top-down and bottom-up research strategies.

EPUE was announced at the EU SET-PLAN Conference on 15 November 2010. EPUE had attracted over 150 universities as members who had completed a survey questionnaire which identified their current research and education capacity at master and doctoral levels. In announcing the European Platform, Professor Torbjørn Digernes (Chairman of EPUE; Rector, Norwegian University of Science and Technology) presented summary data from the EPUE survey on research personnel and projects and postgraduate education programmes which showed that research groups and activities had the necessary critical mass and a majority had long-term projects with external industry partners and other research organisations. Through the building of the European Platform he asserted that EUA sought to demonstrate that Europe’s universities in their activities in basic science, multidisciplinary research and training in energy fields should receive greater attention in future discussions of European energy policies. Universities are natural places for educators, researchers and industry partners to work together over the long-term in an open innovation environment in which new knowledge on energy fields can flourish.

(ii) EPUE – to focus on the Energy Roadmap 2050 at its first event in February 2012

Through the forthcoming work of the European Platform, Europe's universities will wish to take the opportunity of (a) defining the agenda for basic scientific research and (b) the education and training needs and initiatives in the Education Roadmap 2050. To address these goals, EPUE will hold its first high-level event bringing together university leaders and researchers and European policy makers on 23 and 24 February 2012 at Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands.

In addressing the Energy Roadmap 2050 in terms of basic research needs, the [Delft EPUE event](#) will start from the premises of the SET-PLAN and link it to the broad and interdisciplinary nature of university-based research in cutting edge fields. For example, a number of new areas of research – photonics, nanotechnology, bioscience – have already made their mark on science but their impact is yet to be felt in the energy field. The “grand challenges” for energy research that lie ahead are best to be tackled by an open approach without the constraints imposed by short and medium term targets. In the past, and also largely in the present, the by far most important topic of energy research has been in energy conversion. Future necessities require to a greater extent energy management and distribution particularly in the context of energy saving (e.g. energy efficient buildings) and implementation of renewables in grid structures and energy transport over larger distances. In the context of renewables, there is the necessity for energy storage, heat and electricity. The latter also plays an important role in electric mobility.

An equally important contribution to the Energy Roadmap 2050 is the educational mission of the university. In energy related education and all levels of natural sciences, engineering sciences and social sciences/humanities, a comprehensive picture of an interdependent world has to be implemented that makes clear how energy, climate, economy and social structures are connected. Degree programs in any of these areas should be built on a comprehensive basis. In the increasing “open innovation” environment, a closer collaboration of universities and industry enables a transfer of new approaches, research developments and highly trained personnel into industry, and vice-versa. A willingness of industry for such cooperation with universities is driven by the increasing energy and climate problems but also by the high degree of education and professional training necessary to tackle the future problems.

(iii) EPUE – as a European Stakeholder in the forthcoming Energy Roadmap 2050

The timing and deadline of the present Public Consultation on the Energy Roadmap 2050, given the present stage of setting up the work of the European Platform of Universities engaged in Energy Research, has not allowed EUA the scope to provide a coordinated full response. Hence, this statement of interest is made now which emphasises the general point of the centrality of the key future role of basic research and education in the future Energy Roadmap 2050. EPUE looks forward to the report to be published in April 2011 as a result of the present consultation and the forthcoming Energy Roadmap later in 2011. The inaugural EPUE meeting in February 2012 will provide the opportunity for its first major input into what EUA hopes will become a continuing and fruitful dialogue between Europe's universities and European policy making in this crucial field.

*The **European University Association (EUA)** represents and supports **higher education institutions** with approximately 850 members in 47 countries. Members of EUA are European universities involved in teaching and research, national associations of rectors and other associations and networks active in higher education and research.*

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